ATLANTIS

Style Guide

DESIGN PHILOSOPHY

EXPLORERS

XXXI ERA
ANGULAR / SHARP EDGED
INDUSTRIAL
TECHNOLOGY RELIANT

ATLANTEANS

PRIMITIVE
ORGANIC / ERODED
STONE AGED
MAGIC RELIANT

EXPLORERS INVADE ATLANTEANS

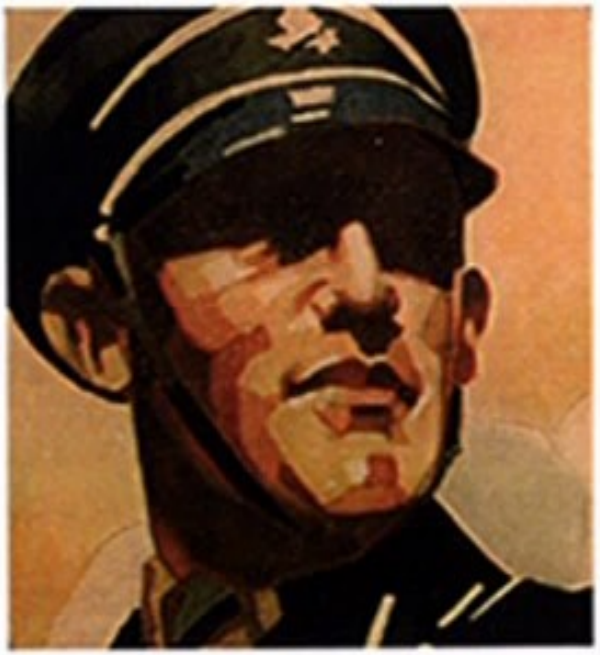
Influences

MIKE MIGNOLA
COMIC BOOK ARTIST

POSTERIZATION

VALUES ARE SIMPLIFIED AND SEPARATED INTO HARD-EDGED SHAPES.

THE FORM IS TURNED BY STEPPING VALUE SHAPES, DARK TO LIGHT, WITHOUT BLENDING.



THE SIMPLIFICATION OF AN IMAGE INTO A LIMITED NUMBER OF FLAT COLOR AREAS.

ARCHITECTURE

ATLANTEAN ARCHITECTURE IS BASED ON ASIAN ARCHITECTURAL VOCABULARY.

NO GREEK OR ROMAN ARCHITECTURE!

ARCHITECTURE

EXAMPLES OF
ATLANTEAN ARCHITECTURE
BY MIKE MIGNOLA

ADAPTING MIGNOLA

KEEP SHAPES SIMPLE AND EASY TO READ

DESIGN THE DARKS

- TO SUPPORT THE STORY
- TO BE READABLE
- TO BALANCE WITH THE LIGHTS

NO YES

USE MIGNOLA-ESQUE STYLIZATION WHEN POSSIBLE.

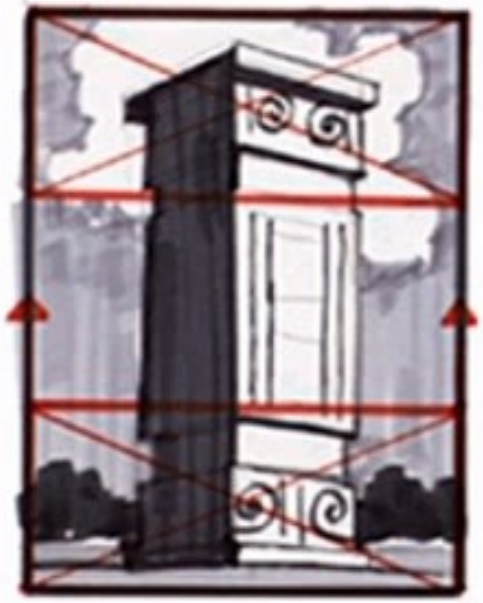
ARCHITECTURE

ATLANTIS IS A CULTURE IN DECLINE. INCLUDE OVERGROWN FALLEN MASONRY AND SCULPTURE, LEANING BUILDINGS & WEATHERED EDGES.

ARCHITECTURE

MAKE THE SCULPTURE THAT LITTERS THE ATLANTEAN LANDSCAPE HUGE FOR INTEREST AND IMPACT. BREAK IT INTO PIECES, PUT IT ON AN ANGLE AND GROW PLANTS ON IT TO MAKE IT LOOK ANCIENT.

Composition



USE A VERTICAL PAN

BECAUSE OF THE EMPHASIS ON HORIZONTALITY, VERTICAL SHOTS ARE HARDER TO STAGE IN C-SCOPE. HERE ARE SOME ALTERNATIVES:

BACK OFF TO A LONG SHOT

USE A LOW CAMERA ANGLE

MIGNOLA STYLE

ATLANTIS CHARACTERS HAVE BEEN INSPIRED BY THE WORK OF COMIC BOOK ARTIST MIKE MIGNOLA, CREATOR OF HELLBOY. COPIES OF HELLBOY COMICS ARE AVAILABLE FROM THE ATLANTIS LIBRARY.

HERE ARE SOME ELEMENTS OF MIGNOLA'S STYLE WILL BE INCORPORATED INTO ATLANTIS:

① ANGULARITY

THERE ARE VERY FEW TRUE CURVES IN ATLANTIS CHARACTER DESIGNS. CURVES HAVE BEEN BROKEN INTO PLANES.

(2) BITE THE BULLET

MIGNOLAS CHARACTERS ARE OFTEN BASED ON A 'BULLET' SHAPE. SOME ATLANTIS CHARACTERS SHARE THIS TRAIT.

IN GENERAL, ATLANTIS DOES NOT USE X-SHAPED CHARACTERS

'BULLET' CHARACTERS OFTEN HAVE SLOPING SHOULDERS WITH A LOW INSERTION POINT FOR THE ARMS.

BULKY TORSOS. WITH SKINNY ARMS & BANDY-LEGS ARE ALSO A MIGNOLA STYLIZATION.

(3) SIMPLE, BLOCKY DRAPERY

PART OF THE ANGULARITY THING- NOTE HOW BREAKS IN SLEEVES & TROUSER LEGS HAVE BEEN BOILED DOWN TO SIMPLE ❯ SHAPES.

TREATMENT OF DRAPERY AT ELBOWS & KNEES HAS A BLOCKY ANGULAR SILHOUETTE, FEW IF ANY INTERIOR FOLD LINES.

EACH CHARACTER HAS ITS OWN UNIQUE SHAPE AND PROPORTIONS, THAT HAVE BEEN PUSHED TO HELP DISTINGUISH IT FROM OTHER CHARACTERS. MAINTAINING THE PUSHED PROPORTIONS WILL HELP THE CHARACTERS REMAIN ON THE STYLE AND INDIVIDUALLY IDENTIFIABLE.

ATLANTIS CHARACTER DESIGN AIMS FOR GRAPHIC SIMPLICITY

SILHOUETTES HAVE BEEN BOILED DOWN TO SIMPLE SHAPES, ACCENTED BY A FEW DETAILS. NON-ESSENTIAL DETAILS HAVE BEEN ELIMINATED.

REST AREAS ARE BALANCED BY DETAILS

DETAILS DRAW ATTENTION TO FACE

NECK/SHOULDER/ARM BECOME ONE SIMPLE DESIGN SHAPE.

NOTE RELATIVELY FEW INTERIOR DETAILS.

HERE ARE SOME DRAWINGS FROM SLEEPING BEAUTY, WHICH ALSO USED A GRAPHICALLY SIMPLE APPROACH TO CHARACTER DESIGN.

COMPLEXITY OF THE HAIR & GOWNS HAS BEEN CONTAINED WITHIN SIMPLE DESIGN SHAPES.

HAND
STYLIZATION
FINGERS LOOK LIKE BENT STRIPS OF PAPER FROM SOME ANGLES
ANGULAR, WITH SHARPLY SQUARED OFF FINGERTIPS.
TRIANGULAR FINGERNAILS

HANDS

Hands, Fingers and Knuckels are squared off

Little limbs sticking out of oversized sleeves and gloves

note how hands are broken down into simple graphic shapes

arches & squares

MOUTHS

Mouths are wide and rectangular.

Lips are blocky.

Betty Davis lipstick

Sometimes with...or without lips

Underbites are popular!

Repetition of equally weighted teeth fill the mouth.

Sometimes jaws are simplified to our rectangle shape - just a clean graphic.

Eyes

Eyes tend to be the focal point of Mignola's character designs...accented by placing them in high contrast shadows or turning glasses into headlights.

noses

Like everything else are simplified and squared off.

Draw eyes realisticlly then simplify to clean sharp graphics.

note graphic handling of wrinkles

TONES

HIGH CONTRAST LIGHTING

NOTE: SPOTLIGHTS ARE NOT CIRCULAR
USE RECTANGLES

Mignola

Breakdown

ATLANTIS
DESIGN THEORY

VERY BASIC CIRCLE, SQUARE, TRIANGLE THEORY

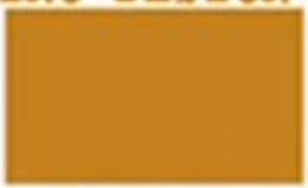
EXPLORERS

AGGRESSIVE
INDUSTRIAL
ANGULAR

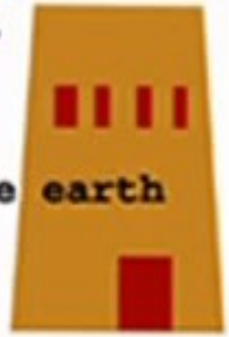
ATLANTIANS

PASSIVE
ORGANIC
WEATHERED

UNIFYING DESIGN SHAPE



SOLID, STURDY
"LIKE A TREE TRUNK"



This design style depends heavily on staging for story. Choosing shapes, shape handling, line, line handling theatrical lighting and color is all decided by what you are accenting in the story in that scene.

KNOW YOUR STORY!

When given an environment to design, find out what its story needs are. Not just who will walk where, but what is the mood, the personality of the environment. What can we add to the story telling with our graphics that will not be told with the action or dialogue.

Ask your PA to see the boards.

Borrow a copy of the flip book to refer to as you design.

If only script pages exist or even just a concept, still research its story needs and design for story potential. Here's your chance to impact story!

RESEARCH !

HIGH CONTRAST

BIG V/S SMALL SHAPES

LIGHT V/S DARK TONES

DETAIL V/S EMPTY SPACE

AGGRESSIVE V/S PASSIVE

INDUSTRIAL V/S ORGANIC

LAYOUT:

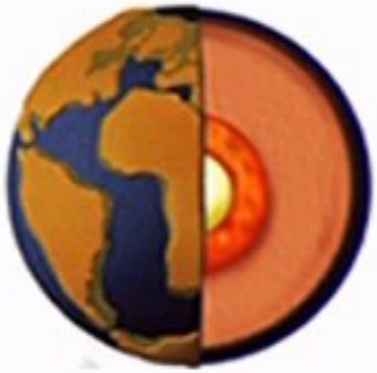
Perspective is flat, distorted as if looking through a wide angle lens.

See "Mulan" for reference on how this simple perspective works in cinematography

LAYERS
REVEALED

THINGS HIDDEN INSIDE OTHER THINGS

(LIKE NESTING DOLLS)

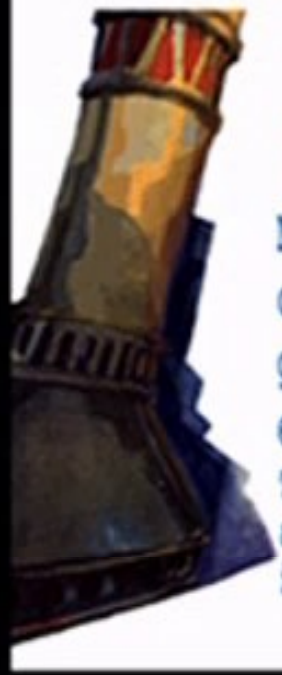


HELLBOY
in the fire
in the shadows
in the logs
on the blade
THE THUNDERBOLT
(STILL BASICLY A BUNCH OF
RECTANGLES
STRUNG TOGETHER)
across the houses into the air
patterns on the stone
in the hair

The Thunderbolt

Reference:
Jack Kirby art
(Mignola's main influence for this style handling)

Use the Thunderbolt to add depth in BGs and render round shapes without using soft shading or blended gradations.



Note how the thunderbolt can be designed to flow graphicly through the environment.

The same thunderbolt flows across the sky, over the roof into the foliage and shadows.

EXPLORERS

ATLANTEANS

Basing props on squares + triangles
saving circles for Atlantis props
Bentwood 1900-10 craftman revival furniture

Table light that lowers or raises.
Can adjust most lighting easily.
Place lights to spotlight where story will be acted out. Anticipate where we will need theatrical lighting.
Avoid random lighting

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
Organize interior decorating according to story! Choose and place objects to create a flow of movement through the room and the story. Think Theatrical Staging!
Avoid random stuff

DESIGNING FOR STORY
Avoiding random stuff

To help focus graphic designs to accent story, avoid random clutter. Not all clutter is random and meaningless. To discern what to keep and what to throw out...think "What will add visual information to the story point of this scene?" "Where are we in time as well as location?" "What personalities should be reflected in this environment?" "Do these objects help the Theatrical layout of this scene?"

KEY: Regard each layout as a living, breathing personality with an objective - purpose. (ie: Milo's basement isn't just a cluttered cellar. It's an oppressive dungeon with a growling beast straining to explode out of its chains (boiler). Milo has made his peaceful nitch for dreaming, but is called upon to battle the beast - keep it restrained. Use the clutter in this cellar with purpose. Use it to focus on the personality of the environment...the personality of the story action.

DESIGNING PROPS FOR STORY:

(Examples from The Ship's Map Room)

Choose proper presentation.

Great idea to have a collection of newspaper articles that give clues to Atlantis' location. But chances are no one will be able to read the headlines while action is running. Visually the scattered papers will read as the morning paper some slob left lying around. If we add a newspaper rack in the shot, it will give the papers a premeditated purpose. Without reading headlines, we will know these papers are part of the research library.

Choose props that offer story business.

Pictures of boats are a nice nautical touch, but do they help with our story telling? Nice wall decore, but what can our actors do with them? How about replacing pictures with functional objects such as a sub communications system? People can be called to conference...directions can be sent to engine room. Think business.

Replace random pipes with clocks to help their calculations.

models are great for actors to play with. Careful not to dominate the scene with them. Watch out for upstaging!

Subtilties in graphic designs can speak volumes

about personalities, locations, time periods, functions.

tweek generic decor to a custom made job.

use this symbol as a theme.

generic Craftsman furniture of the era...or expensive designer Craftsman furniture of the era.

We are dealing with a rich aesthetic.

If we hit high seas, the books and slat racks are going sailing. Best to tweek furniture to accomodate surroundings.

Top slides up and down to seal and protect objects stored inside.

Customize workspace for sea voyage

Convert a drink stand into a fancy pencil holder. Keep ink wells, compasses rulers and pens from flying across the room in a storm.

bolt to floor.

a leather strap snaps across books to keep them safe.

Canvas strap is also animation audience

a high rim and strap secure books on shelf

sunken tops

THEATRICAL LIGHTING

Use styled lighting to spotlight the story point/action of the scene.

The point of highest contrast is where the main story thing happens.

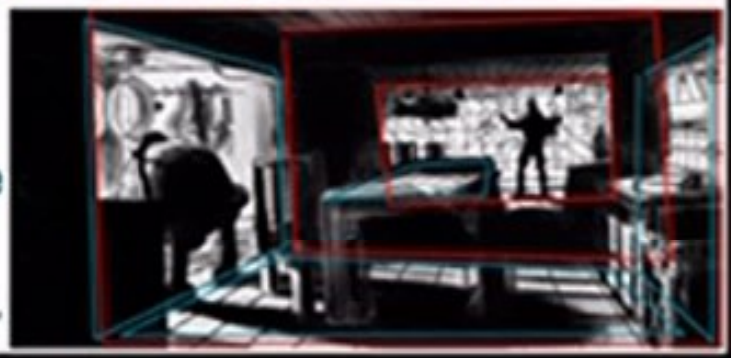
With this lighting and layout it looks like the main action will happen at the lonely coat rack, then move to the end chair.

If the story focus is here we map our journey...

Let's put the globe in the spotlight and punch up the contrast accenting our guy at the map. Use the light to hit objects that will pull us through a flowing graphic narrative.

The Square is our Layout Theme shape

Use it to set up eye direction, graphic flow, camera move



LIGHTING QUESTION :

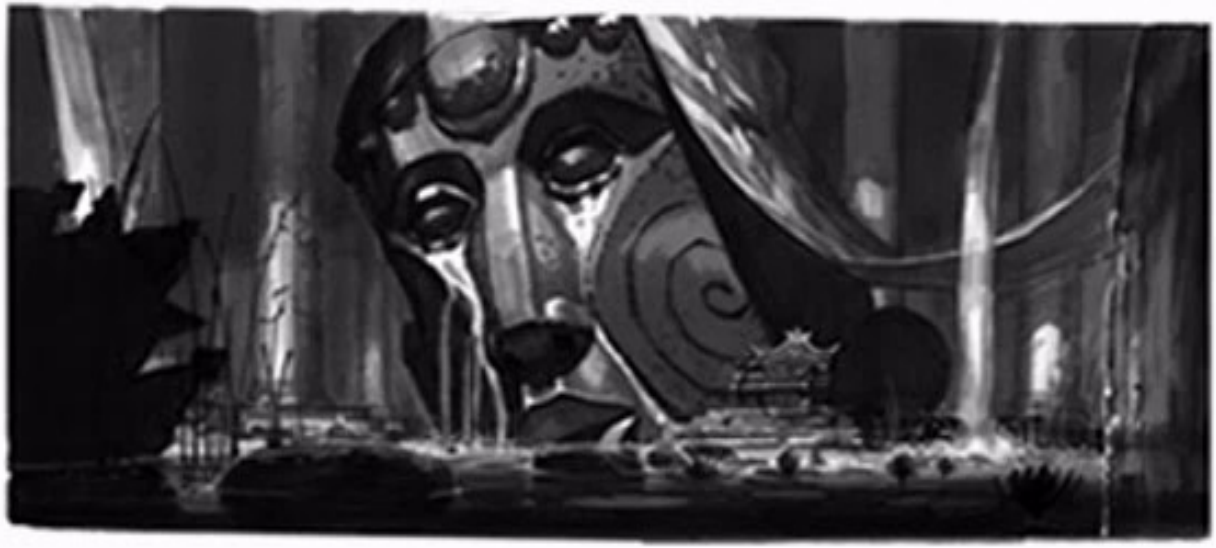
HOW ARE WE HANDLING THE LIGHT STYLING ?

SHOULD WE DESIGN A MORE THEATRICAL LIGHTING DESIGN ... TO PUSH THE ACTION / ADVENTURE GRAPHIC NOVEL LOOK ?

THE STATEMENT HERE IS THIS IS A BEAUTIFUL ENVIRONMENT.

THE POINT OF HIGHEST CONTRAST IS THE HEAD'S RIGHT EYE.
SECOND ARE THE WATERFALLS IN THIS SWAMP ENVIRONMENT.
THE LAST THING I NOTICE IS THE CHAIR.

WITH THIS EQUALLY WEIGHTED LIGHTING I SEE THIS AS A BEAUTIFUL, SERENE WATER GARDEN THAT SOMEONE THOUGHT WOULD BE A NICE PLACE TO SIT A PARK BENCH IN FOR MEDITATION.



THE STATEMENT HERE IS THIS IS A THRONE ROOM.

THE POINT OF HIGHEST CONTRAST IS THE THRONE. THE HEAD IS NOW DROPPED SECOND IN LINE WITH THE WATERFALLS. ALL OTHER OBJECTS ARE DROPPED INTO OBSCURITY.

PUSHED THEATRICAL STAGE LIGHTING IS USED TO GRAPHICLLY FOCUS EYE DIRECTION TO THE STORY STATEMENT RATHER THAN THE ENVIRONMENT STATEMENT.

TONE SPECIFICS:

Same rule of detailing used in layout lighting is used on specific objects.

Note how the choice of where to detail the tree bark adds a tone without litterally adding a new tone.

Also note the subtle gradation of color that directs the eye and suggests lighting.

Note too how clever use of flat color to play off of flat color can suggest lighting and add more depth.

Direction of detailing can suggest richer form and demension of objects as well as help direct the eye towards the story.

THINK STORY

Always light theatrically.

Notice how high contrast focuses our attention to her telling eyes.

Besides the flat color and the obvious dark tone, there is a middle tone gradating into the flat color to add form. Note too, that gradation is still graphic and not realistic shading. Designed for story.

Don't be afraid to drop features away into tones.

Use tones for story. If our character's mood demands features be dropped to highlight an attitude... then drop away!

TONE TYPES:

Limit pallette to 3 tones
Light, Dark, maybe a medium

1. Use detailing for tone. Note how the bricks are suggesting a shadowing without using a gradation or a middle tone.

3. Design tone shapes using the Thunderbolt.

2. For more depth Add to detailing a subtle middle tone or slight gradation. Always play light against dark.

Use Theatrical lighting not realistic lighting

Keep things simple.

Design light to tell story.

4.

TONES IN LAYOUT

Notice how the center of attention has the most detail and color.
As we drop away from the action, we lose detail.
Color becomes more monochromatic and objects are reduced to simple shapes of tone.

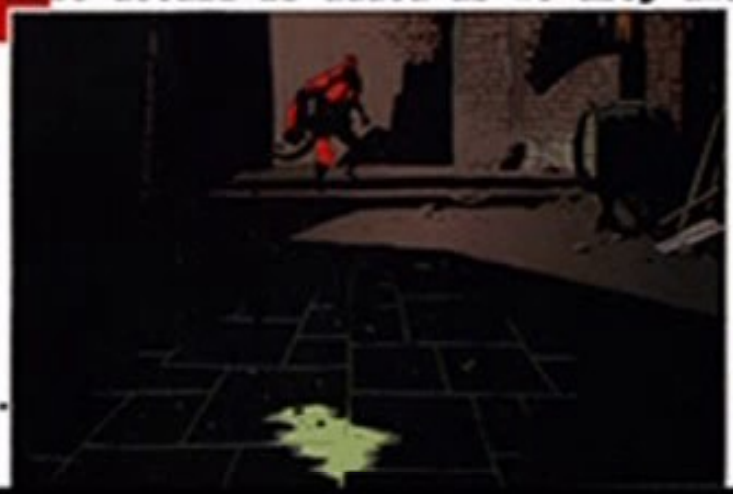
The action is always spotlighted theatrically.

What is important is always placed in high contrast.

Characters are always staged in the least detailed area putting them in a spotlight.

Detail and tone are used to frame them - direct the eye towards their action / story.

The opposite happens here.
The action spot is the simple area.
More detail is added as we drop away.



Note how,despite the lack of detail on the floor, we still see our perspective by the placement and shape design of our light.

Keep detail SIMPLE !